

SPHAEROPSIS GALL OF BOTTLEBRUSH

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Bottlebrush (*Callistemon* spp.) is a popular small evergreen ornamental tree grown primarily in central Florida and southward (1,4). Its colorful bottle-brush-like flowers and easy maintenance make this a very suitable landscape plant.

SYMPTOMS. Stem galls caused by the fungus *Sphaeropsis tumefaciens* Hedges (5) vary in size from small stem swellings to baseball-sized enlargements (fig. 1). Frequently, large galls are associated with multiple stem branches, a condition known as witches' broom. The fungus appears to infect the stems of bottlebrush more easily through wounds (7).

Stem galls are found on established plantings and occasionally in the commercial nursery. These galls are debilitating to the tree as well as unsightly.

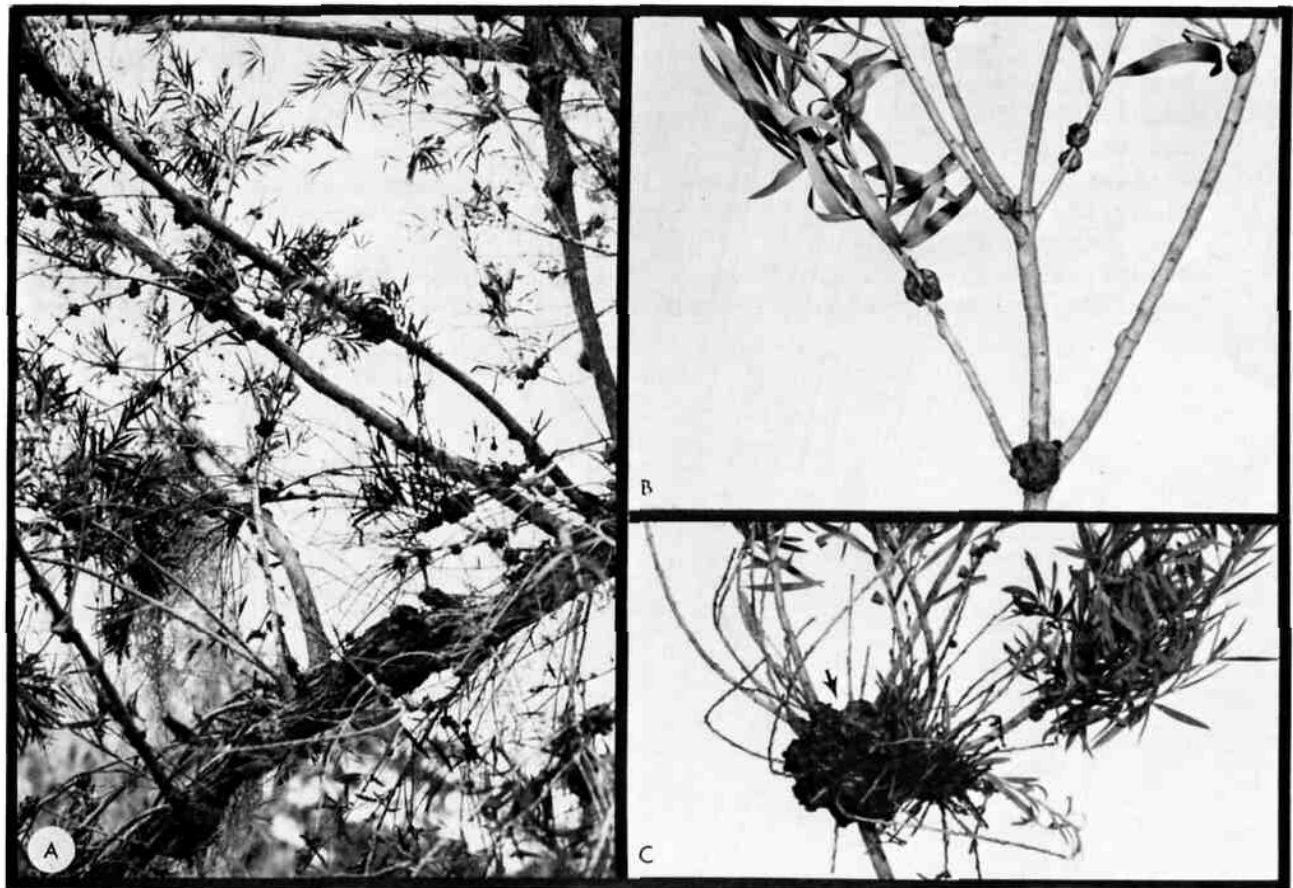


Fig. 1. *Sphaeropsis* galling of bottlebrush: A) tree showing extensive galling; B) small developing galls on branches; C) large gall showing witches' broom effect.

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HOST RANGE. Galls, caused by *S. tumefaciens*, have been reported on Citrus spp. primarily in Jamaica (1,6). In Florida, citrus is apparently attacked infrequently (1,3). This fungus has been associated also with galls on *Carissa* spp., *Nerium oleander* L., *Ilex opaca* Ait., *Schinus terebinthifolius* Raddi., and *Eucalyptus cinerea* F. Muell. ex. Benth. (2).

CONTROL. Prune out branches well below gall areas and destroy infected branches. Pruning tools should be dipped in a disinfestant such as 10% Clorox before each cut. Pruning wounds on the branches should be treated with protective paint. Information on control with chemicals is lacking, but a fungicide such as maneb is suggested as a preventive measure.

References

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